UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/49/81
S/1994/209
24 February 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Forty-ninth session
Item 72 of the preliminary list*
MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-ninth year

Letter dated 23 February 1994 from the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the statement issued on 22 February 1994 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Albania concerning the Serbian propaganda on the border incidents in the northern Albanian borders (see annex).

I would be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 72 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Pellumb KULLA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* A/49/50.

ANNEX

Statement issued on 22 February 1994 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania

The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) has recently published a memorandum on border incidents on the border with Albania, in which, in pursuit of certain aims, most absurd accusations are formulated against the Republic of Albania. It alleges that Albania is increasing incidents on the Albanian-Yugoslav border by urging its own citizens to cross the border illegally in order to raise tension in inter-State relations and to achieve the idea of Greater Albania. The Yugoslav side, after formulating a series of insinuations against Albanian foreign policy, runs down the correct relations of Albania with other countries, offering dialogue as the way to the settlement of all issues, allegedly "in the interest of the peoples of the two countries and peace and stability in the Balkans and Europe".

The absurd character of the contents of the memorandum prompts one not to take it seriously, but since history indicates that a vacuum can be filled with slander and concoctions, we deem it reasonable once more to express openly the Albanian stand towards the accusations contained in the memorandum.

The truth about the so-called "incidents and provocations on the border by the Albanian side" is well known inside and outside Albania. From the denunciations by Albania and the conclusions of the permanent monitors of the European Community in the interior and along the Albanian side of the border, made known to the public and the competent international organizations, it results that the main cause of the border incidents has been the unjustified opening of fire by Yugoslav border guards against Albanian citizens, who have never threatened or endangered the lives of the Yugoslav frontier guards. The victims (21 dead or wounded since early January 1993) have all been Albanians and not a single Serb, despite the Serbian concoction about a phantom victim of the Yugoslav side.

The Republic of Albania has repeatedly declared that it is against violent border changes, and its authorities have always made efforts to preserve, respect and maintain the border line. This is borne out by the negotiations that have been held between the two sides in the framework of the Central Commission on Border Incidents and Signs, as well as by the meetings that the Albanian side is prepared to hold with the other side soon, even ahead of the agreed schedule.

The accusations levelled at the Albanian side of having demolished, damaged or removed border signs deep in Yugoslav territory, which gives one the impression that the Yugoslav territory is not guarded by Yugoslav forces because not only Albanian civilians, but Albanian official authorities have allegedly infiltrated it, are absurd and indicate uninformed opinion. Albania rejects them as non-existent and ill-wishing.

The above-mentioned memorandum states that the Albanians in Kosova enjoy all rights. Such an assessment runs openly counter to the conclusions and decisions adopted by the Security Council, the European Parliament, the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and, particularly, by the General Assembly, which, at its recent session, by adopting a special resolution, attached special attention to the grave situation in Kosova. Likewise, in a series of documents, other organizations point out the real situation of the Albanian population in Kosova. The recent report of the State Department of the United States of America on human rights is irrefutable evidence of the situation in which the Albanians find themselves, a situation which is growing more serious after the act undertaken by Belgrade to expel CSCE monitors from Kosova. This was also stressed at the recent meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the CSCE member countries at Rome and is being witnessed every day in the acts of violence and frame-ups against Albanians.

It is not Albania that has created the tense situation in Kosova, instead, it is Serbia's policy, its tanks and the presence of more than 50,000 Serbian policemen and soldiers there and their violence and terror that have been conducive to a tragic colonial situation, where even children are denied the right to study in their mother tongue, and the wholesale sacking of Albanians, hence the silent ethnic cleansing of the Albanian population. Over the last two years, more than 200,000 Albanians have left Kosova because of Serbian persecution.

In this context, it is more than natural for Albania to take an interest in and concern itself in the future with the rights of the Albanians in Kosova and Montenegro, who, contrary to what Belgrade considers them to be, are not a minority, but an entire people who live in their own native land. Belgrade's "sincere" good will about good relations with Albania is clearly seen through when one sees that in the memorandum it puts on a par approximately 2 million Albanians in Kosova and Montenegro with several dozens of Serbs and Montenegrins who live in Albania. The interest Albania takes in the Albanians, wherever they are, has a legitimate basis, sanctioned in basic international documents.

The slander and accusations against the Republic of Albania concerning its open foreign policy are clear evidence of an anti-Albanian stand and fear of its extending relations with friendly countries and international organizations. Albania's rapprochement with united Europe, NATO, etc., is not directed against other States. It is an expression of the democratization of its internal and external policies. Accusations against such a policy are characteristic of totalitarian regimes, which rely on social and national oppression in their internal policy and on aggression and expansion in their foreign policy, contravening the global spirit of democratization in Europe.

With its policy in the Balkans and its relations with different nearby and distant States, as well as with international organizations, democratic Albania has always tried to serve the safeguarding of its independence and State sovereignty, as well as peace and security in the entire region. Democratic Albania has never been cause for concern for the Balkan region or Europe. It has never inspired aggression, nor has it been a source of conflict and war. The world knows too well those who seek to set fire to the Balkans and really threaten peace in Europe and beyond.

Anyone who is a realist does not find it difficult to understand that the barriers to dialogue are not raised by democratic Albania, which has put dialogue at the very foundation of its entire policy, but by the intolerance characteristic of Belgrade's foreign and internal policies. Violence, terror, political blackmail, new troop concentrations and the setting up of naval military bases on the border with Albania are not the way to dialogue.

Open borders and the free flow of people are not hindered by Albania. Recently, the Yugoslav side has come forward with proposals for new border crossings with the aim of increasing the flow of people. These proposals are being studied and will require time for endorsement, even by the relevant international bodies, because of the sanctions. Without waiting for a reply and prejudging it, in its memorandum, the Yugoslav side declares that Albania has "rejected" these proposals. It should be noted that the predisposition of the Yugoslav side for increased flow of people does not comply with the reality, which tells a different story. The two existing border crossings at present are not exploited at full capacity because of restrictions created by the Yugoslav side, such as restrictions on exit visas for its own citizens. It is fully understandable that this restriction is a heavy burden, especially on about 2 million Albanians living in Kosova and Montenegro, who naturally want to communicate with their relatives in Albania. According to observations of the CSCE monitors in Kosova, those Albanians, including people in political, scientific, cultural and other fields, who have been found guilty by the Yugoslav side of entering Albania without an exit visa, have been punished severely, deprived of their passports or even jailed.

The Republic of Albania rejects as unfounded and demagogic the memorandum that has been publicized by the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), regarding it as another anti-Albanian step of a pronounced provocative and slanderous character aimed at improving Serbia's image in the world in order to portray it as a victim of the so-called destabilizing policy of other States or military alliances and organizations. The memorandum has the features of the Serbian chauvinistic propaganda campaign that preceded the aggression at its northern borders.

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